

EXHIBIT 43



INTERVIEW I

"THERE IS SOMETHING STUPID IN VIOLENCE AS VIOLENCE."

Conducted by
MARK HEBERT

The following interview, conducted in early 1969, originally appeared in issues #30 and 31 of *The Comics Journal's* predecessor, *The Nostalgia Journal* (November and December 1976). Kirby had just moved from New York to California and his stint at Marvel Comics was winding down.

THE COMICS JOURNAL: What was the first comic book you ever did?

KIRBY: Gee, that was way back: it was a thing called *Wild Boy Magazine*. It was published by Will Eisner in partnership with a man named Jerry Iger. I worked under a mess of pseudonyms. I still have a copy. My mother saved it.

TCH: How old were you then?

KIRBY: I was about 20 or 21 — around there.

TCH: How about your background in art?

KIRBY: Primitive. I'm a Depression-era teenager, so I began going to the Pratt Institute in New York. Well, I figured, "Here's where I'll make it." And I was there only one day and the Depression hit. I've been a loser ever since. *[Laughs]*

TCH: When did you meet Joe Simon?

KIRBY: When everybody met everybody else in the field. The field was in a chaotic state. Everyone was running around working for everyone else. I met Joe Simon, I met everybody else, anyone you could think of — you know, the old crowd. When I got a feature to do, I'd tell Joe about it, and when he had a feature to do, he'd tell me about it. Then he became editor of *Adas*, which was pre-Marvel Marvel. I went to work there and *Captain America* was born. That was 1940.

TCH: What part did you have in creating *Captain America*? How did it come about?

KIRBY: Well, I can't tell you how it came about for my own reasons, and there are legal reasons involved. I can't talk about it. Except that we were both involved in it. And you know the war was shaping up, everyone was banging on drums, naturally it —

From *Fantastic Four* #89, 1969.
Edited by Joe Simon.

A THE COMICS JOURNAL LIBRARY JACK KIRBY



Joe Simon (standing)
and Jack Kirby,
c. 1946.

TCh — *came from patriotism.*

KIRBY: Oh sure, it had to. You know, there were so many Captains then: Captain Marvel, Captain this, Captain that.

TCh: *It had to be a Captain.*

KIRBY: We're not geruses by any means, but I shaped the character itself and I gave it the formula — the action formula — because nothing around really moved. I had a background in animation and I created the follow-up action, which none of the strips had. In other words, another strip might have one action in one panel and an unrelated action in another panel, whereas I would have a continuous slug fight. If a guy parried he would follow it up with a thrust. A villain would throw a chair at him, the fellow would duck under the wood or the villain's foot, and knock them in all three directions. So it would give the strip a little motion and it gave it a kind of format.

If you have a chance to look at the old strips, you'll notice there are no

backgrounds in them and the entire thing concentrates on action. It's almost like a movie.

TCh: *After 10 issues of Captain America you left, didn't you?*

KIRBY: Yes, Joe and I went to work with DC. We did *Sandman* and *Boy Commandos*. We had one thing called *The Newboy Legion*, which was a pretty nice little strip. Before I left, I created *Young Allies* for Atlas, which was a patriotic strip and actually was the first team strip — in other words, four boys. Following that, there was four anything: four boys, four girls, four supervillains or superheroes. It became kind of a team thing and it might have been a kind of primitive predecessor to the *Fantastic Four*. Even before I created the FF, I created the *Challengers [of the Unknown]*, which —

TCh: *— is the same thing.*

KIRBY: And if you notice the uniforms, they're the same. It kind of gets to be a habitual thing. My idea of a superhero is some guy who can engage in action. And you can't engage in action in a business suit so I always give them a skintight uniform with a belt. Now I dress them up. If you notice, the *Challengers* and the FF have a minimum of decoration. And, of course, the Thing's skin is a kind of decoration, breaking up the monotony of the blue uniform. But then *Black Bolt* I began to dress up — the lightning insignia. *Karnak* with the Judo-type uniform, it's almost Oriental and half-Egyptian, and *Medusa* with her hair. I began to dress all of them up. In fact, when I got to *Galactus*, the uniforms were so ornate that I couldn't remember them. I had to have a sketch by my side all the time. I called the office every week for sketches. I forgot the costumes all the time.

TCh: *The Silver Surfer was just a glided body.*

KIRBY: The Silver Surfer is simple — the same with *Spider-Man*'s eyes, which actually date back to the *Vision*. I don't know if you ever saw the *Vision* I created for the old Atlas mags which was, I think, at the same time *Captain America* was out. I set the pattern for the eyes, which are kind of mystic.

TCh: *They are. When horror comics — the EC line and the like — were on the rise, what part did you play?*

KIRBY: I try to keep within certain standards. In other words, I won't go below them and I can't go above them unless I become intellectually generated in some way to do a different type of comic. My bag is superheroes and I don't claim to do anything more or less. But I do write a good story and it's my only defense against anyone else. So when the horror comics came out and — for instance, when the EC group came out, they were very good. Very creative, very good, except for one thing: they were young and maybe their idea of good taste or standards might have been a lot more flexible. I went to a college recently where some kid showed me a magazine that I, being an old codger, would consider pornographic, but to him it wasn't. I guess it was the same with EC. They went wild — creatively wild — on the horror stuff. They would have a vampire spend a weekend with a ghoul and they get snowbound in a cabin, so how do they survive? You see what I mean? So they show the ghoul chomping on the vampire and the vampire sucking the blood of the ghoul. A lot of people might like that kind of thing, but the parents of the kids raised a heck of a hue and cry, especially with this guy [Fredric Wertham]. So, I had to compete with that and the only way I could was to write better stories, and somehow my books kept up with them.

I put out a book called *Black Magic*, which was a heck of a good book and it sold very well. When the hue and cry got louder, EC bore the brunt of it, which I thought was right, despite the fact that I respected them highly. These were young guys, creative guys — I love experimenters — I know them all and I love them all, but I think that they left themselves open to a lot of criticism. That and a lot of other things affected them. The distributors wouldn't handle the books — they handled a minimum, of course. When people didn't have revenues from other sources, they couldn't survive and the books folded. Simple as that. They tried gimmicks like 3-D. I don't know if you remember those, but they were strictly gimmicks. You can't read a 3-D book every month, you'll go blind.

[Laughter]

TCh: *Or lose the glasses.*

KIRBY: But, you know, it's just a toy really, no more than that. It couldn't compete with a Cinemascope film. Let's face it, comics is a two-dimensional medium whereas Cinemascope has more dimension to it, more depth and it moves faster. It's more lifelike and the more lifelike it is, the more impressed you are with the image.

TCh: *Have you seen 2001?*

KIRBY: Sure, loved it! I see it from a technician's viewpoint. From that viewpoint it's perfect. I loved the music and the concept was terrific. A lot of people went to see it and there was a wide variety of opinion on it. I saw it as a viewer and liked it as a viewer, and I made my own reason, in my mind, as to what the ending meant. I think that's what everyone's supposed to do. So, for myself it became one thing, but to a lot of people the ending became something else because they interpreted it differently or had their own vision of what it might be. I think that was Kubrick's intent. My son bought the 2001 album and the music is terrific. I can listen to it all the time.

TCh: *Music to draw by.*

KIRBY: No, you know what I do when I draw? I put on the TV set and turn the sound off, and then put on the radio, and I listen to the radio and watch TV and draw at the same time — it's like having company at the same time. And what's more, I know everything they're going to say on TV — I mean, what the hell can they say that's going to surprise you? A lot of the campy movies I've seen before, and I know what Bogart is going to say. It's ridiculous just to listen to the dialogue over and over again. So I just watch the movie because it's

something to do. It provides a little company for a lonely job, I guess. So it's like a little world in itself.

TCH: How do you feel about giving interviews?

KUBRICK: I try to be consistent. Everybody tries to dredge my memory for a lot of facts, which kind of adds a little sentimentality to the history of comics, which I think is a good thing. The history of comics is a very important thing because it's a medium like radio, TV or movies. It's been here a long time, and people have supplied entertainment all this time through a generation of kids. General Eisenhower traded comics with the soldiers during W.W. II. So everybody read comics. Some people won't admit it, whereas others will.

TCH: But people don't take it as a medium as potentially great as TV or film.

KUBRICK: It hasn't got the scope because it hasn't been exploited to that extent. In other words, it isn't a household item like TV or radio. TV is as important as the bathroom now.

TCH: Have you been listening to the radio stations around here?

KUBRICK: Yeah.

TCH: There's not much good listening on the radio anymore.

KUBRICK: Not good stuff, but just the same stuff. In other words, you don't hear anything refreshing and I'll take a knock as well as a boost, a kook or a rational man just for a change. Life itself is like a movie; it's got to keep moving, it's got to keep changing. There's such a variety of people, you want to know them all. Don't get me wrong — there are some I wouldn't want to meet. [Laughter] Be selective like anyone else; be conditioned like anybody else. There are some guys who say, "I want to experience everything," and they get themselves into a hole and they can't get out. I'm just not that type. I'm kind of a conventional type, really. But I do like a change in viewing and listening. I'll run a certain gamut. I'm conditioned to certain things. I'll react to things when they get too wild for me, and what may be wild for me may be conventional for others. It's the atmosphere you live in or have been raised in. I realize that I'm a product of certain conditioning and I'm going to remain that way. I can't do otherwise. I feel that every human being has some kind of ultimate point of no return, where you are what you are and that's it. You know if you become something else...

It's that you have to stay in that groove. If you're not conditioned to stay in that groove, that's it for you. You'll either have a nervous breakdown or get sick or get into trouble. That's what I feel would happen to me if I broke out of my groove, so I don't. Don't get me wrong. I don't put down anybody in their own groove because that's the point to which they have come. I can't change it; I can't change them and I won't talk them out of anything.

TCH: After the EC Age, there was little superhero activity. Back then you —

KUBRICK: There was. I tried a strip called *Fighting American*. It was a satire and I had a ball with it. But by that time, the slide was on and all the outfits were folding except for a few. DC and Marvel had other revenues — they sold pulps and paperback books, and kept their comics going. There were a lot of other outfits that folded and certainly I was with the wrong outfit! [Laughter] I floundered like everyone else did, so I returned to the big outfits. That's when I did *Challengers of the Unknown* for DC. And from DC, I switched to Marvel.

TCH: Why did comics start to fold and lose popularity?

KUBRICK: There was no experimentation. Nobody was experimenting. The only experimentation was the stuff I did. There were no such things as romance books until I began to work on them. See, that's all I've been doing all these years — experimenting with new stuff. I feel that the superheroes have a way to go and I'm trying to find where they're going because they might stop dead. Life moves on and even now while we're talking here, you're growing old and your kid brother's ideas might prevail. Whatever you say your kid brother won't listen to because he's

going to think that it's old hat; he won't accept it. I have to follow that kid because he's going to buy my comics.

There are times I even go beyond him.

Now when I did *SHIELD*, I had to go five-to-ten years beyond James Bond. I couldn't accept Bond, but he was the big rage. *SHIELD* was to be patterned on the super-secret agent, just like James Bond.

But James Bond already was, and I had to go beyond him — that was my job. I had to experiment with things. I had to take one leap beyond James Bond. Every time a James Bond picture came out, I had to have four or five gimmicks in a story which would allow a

reader to see something different than James Bond. If I had the kind of gimmicks James Bond used, they wouldn't read the comic.

TCH: That's why Kubrick is so great — he's always ten years ahead of his time.

KUBRICK: Oh yes, of course.

TCH: That's why he's so controversial.

KUBRICK: Kubrick injects himself into whatever he does. If he does a science-fiction movie, you're going to see Kubrick's science fiction; if he does a romance or a prizefighter movie, you're going to see a Kubrick prizefighter. All of his movies are stylized. Steve Ditko has his personal stamp on his work. If you see a Ditko drawing, you know it's Ditko. That's my point: Whatever you work on — it



An unpublished
Black Magic cover,
1954.

THE COMICS JOURNAL LIBRARY/JACK KIRBY

[[I never had a childhood, I never ever had a young manhood. I never had time for it.]]

Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D., art by Kirby and Jim Steranko.

doesn't even have to be comics — it should have something of you in it. The most you can really do in life is leave a little of yourself behind. That's all. Maybe in a small way, maybe in a big way. Some do it in a good way, some in an evil way or what we call evil. That, I think, is the point of the whole shebang. You come, you contribute a little, leave a little. It may not be much but it's something and that's it. What more can you do within your own limits? If you're asked to do more, try it. I try to do it in comics. I give the most I can because I feel that people won't take any less. It's like combat, really: if you stop, you're dead, so you have to keep moving. That's the way I approach comics. If it ain't with action, it's with something else. My job is to make people watch.

TCh Like in sports where you have to keep up the momentum.

KIRBY The more colorful player's batting averages may be pretty bad, but people will watch. Mickey Mantle was no great shakes as a ballplayer, but Mickey Mantle was Mickey Mantle. People would come to see him for some reason. I'm not a Mantle fan but I know about him, and I know people talk about him so I know there was something about him that made him distinctive. In my day it was Lou Gehrig, Babe Ruth and Satchel Paige, who were really great and as good as any ballplayer I ever heard of. These men were distinctive; they had something and whatever they did in the game, they did as personalities.

That's what I try to do in comics. I feel a man can't be bland. He can't be, because he loses something of himself. If I feel it's natural to do it, I do it. I feel there is a certain richness in being right or wrong. If you're a bland person

who says nothing, does nothing, sees nothing and dares nothing, I think you're cheating yourself. If you're not doing something, trying something or experimenting with something to interest you, you have to interest yourself in something. What the heck is it all for? I mean, sooner or later, when my generation sinks into senility, I think the younger people are going to take all the history that remains of these past ages and play around with it like a museum — they're going to investigate it and have a great time with it. They're going to look at guns and look at the books and look at the graves and look at everything that's gone before, and find out what the hell made it tick. I think the younger generation is smart enough to do that.

TCh I don't quite see it like that.

KIRBY Well, I feel that way. I was up at Santa Cruz University and I talked to some of the young people and they made so much sense to me — more sense than my ... well, not that much ... [Laughter]

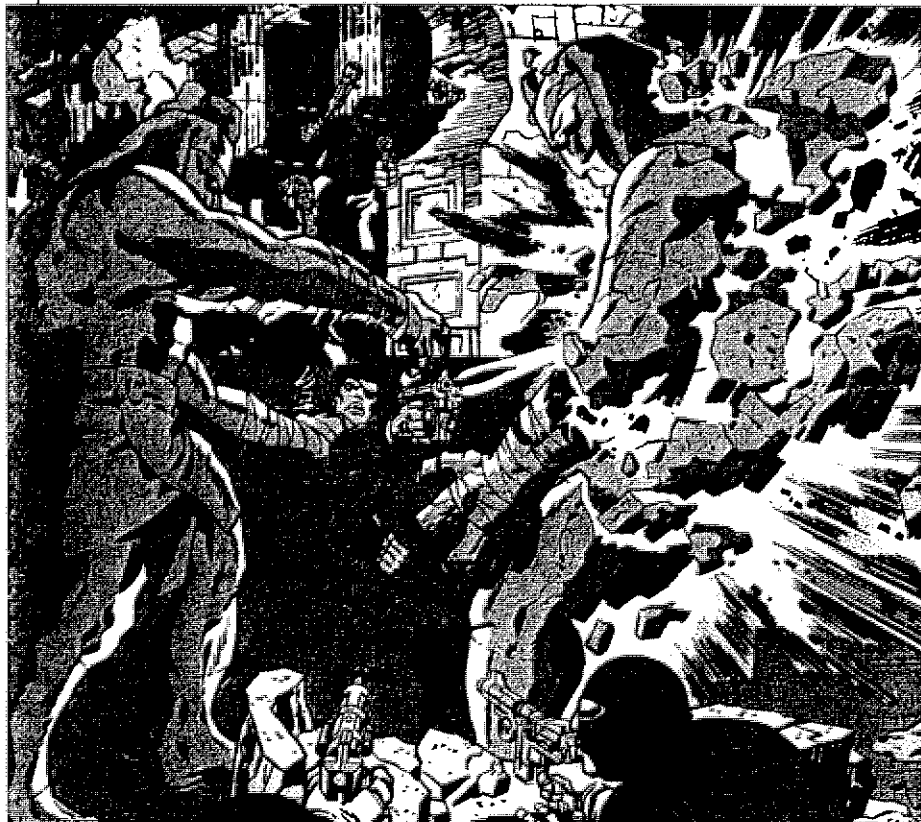
Well, not more than my generation because it was caught up in something it couldn't do anything about. Even if my generation had rebelled or stood up to our parents and said, "Well, we don't like your standards," there wasn't any time. We weren't that affluent. We had to drive, we had to fight, we had to claw, we had to kick the other guy in the eye. There was no time even to think. To go to college was unheard of around my way. If a guy wanted to go to college they would ask, "What does your father own? Stock in General Motors?" So all my generation could do was work. You worked, you connived and you fought. My generation was very hostile, and that's why it's so authoritarian and why it loves kids. I know that I would have loved ... I never had a childhood, I never ever had a young manhood. I never had time for it.

TCh Are you like this around other people? Off the cuff?

KIRBY If you ask other people, I'm a pretty spontaneous guy and I wind up giving them lectures. [Laughter] So if there is anything you want to ask me, just shut me up and say so.

TCh After Fighting American, you went to Marvel and did fantasy stories with monsters and predictable endings.

KIRBY You still had an audience for that kind of thing. I tried to work it out with Stan [Lee], to hint about



superheroes. There were a few still going but they didn't have the big audience they had. There was a thing I was involved in, *The Fly*, which got a reaction and because of that I told Stan that there might be a hope for superheroes. "Why don't we try Captain America again?" I kept harping on it and Marvel was quiet in those days, like every other office, and then things began to pick up and gain momentum.

TCh: DC started the revival of its characters, which may have had a lot to do with it.

KIRBY: I had no time to keep tabs on DC because I was so involved with Marvel.

TCh: Then the *Fantastic Four* came along, which was a small revolution in itself.

KIRBY: Well, it was a revolution in the sense that it was now — the superhero had become *now*. I felt like experimenting with gimmicks. When I drew a gimmick, it wasn't the old type of gimmick; it was everything based on right now and what people saw everyday and what they might see five or ten years from now. I could take electronic setups and just let them run riotous, and that led to the gadgets you might see today. That's how the Negative Zone came about. I began to experiment with that kind of stuff and that's how Ego came about. I began to throw my mind out in all different directions.

There was a time when I had to do a story about a living planet. A planet that was alive; a planet that was intelligent. That was nothing new either because there had been other stories on live planets but that's not acceptable. Oh, I could tell you that there was a living planet somewhere and you would say, "Yeah, that's wild," but how do you relate to it? Why is it alive? So I felt somewhere out in the universe, the universe turns liquid — becomes denser and turns liquid — and that in this liquid, there was a giant multiple virus, and if this multiple virus remained isolated for millions and millions of years, it would begin to think. It would begin to evolve by itself and it would begin to think. By the time we reached it, it might be quite superior to us — and that was Ego. That was acceptable because I was answering questions that someone might ask about it. It's a concept. I feel somewhere — in fact, it almost makes sense — that the universe gets denser and the atoms grow more compact and possibly nothingness becomes something and that something gets bigger and it gets bigger and it might resolve itself into some kind of liquid atoms. Why not?

TCh: It all reminds me of what John and Bobby Kennedy used as a favorite quote: "Some men see things as they are and ask why, while I dream things that never were and ask why not."

KIRBY: Well, maybe I'm in the second category. In fact I'll buy that. I would rather be in that category because I feel there are no experts anywhere in anything. Semantically, I can take anyone apart. For that reason, I feel there are no rigid principles anywhere. If someone says, "Two plus two equals four," I won't accept it. I say, "Well, that's Euclidian mathematics, right?" Why should I follow the mathematics of Euclid? Maybe there's another type of math that makes two plus two equal to six. I would like to try that. Maybe the world will be based on a type of mathematics that Euclid didn't even figure.

TCh: It's like children. They see things differently than adults, and are mocked because of it.

KIRBY: Sure, and that's why I don't. I want them to tell me more, because when they tell me something they see, I may be looking at the beginning of a new world. I may see forms take place that I've never seen before. Children will sometimes say things which bear following up. When you try to make logic out of them they evolve into new concepts, and from a child's question may come an entirely new concept. Why should I avoid it, or why shouldn't I look for it when it's already there? What are they going to do for me except maybe enrich my knowledge? I would like to know more.

World War II field drawing, October 1944.

TCh: Surely you've noticed that *The Fly* and *Ant Man* are very similar.

KIRBY: Not only that, but I feel man's intellect hasn't actually collided with the insects. In other words, I feel that somehow there may be some kind of rapport that man has never had with insects, which he may find if he was on the same level in some way. That should be explored. Maybe the insect in his own size has some kind of intelligence we can't fathom because we're so damn big.

TCh: Why do you start a character then drop it and have someone else take over?

KIRBY: Because I only have two arms. And I'm getting older. [Laughter] I suppose that's the reason.

TCh: You draw almost everything.

[[My generation was caught up in something it couldn't do anything about. We had to drive, we had to fight, we had to claw, we had to kick the other guy in the eye. There was no time even to think.]]



The Silver Surfer was an afterthought... I thought it'd be great if I could show a kind of fallen angel type of thing, which the Silver Surfer is.

KIRBY: I did, just about.

TCH: You created and drew all of Marvel's standard heroes.

KIRBY: That's right.

TCH: And they were all the same — Thor, Ant-Man, Iron Man —

KIRBY: In spite of it.

TCH: Exactly. Except for the Hulk who was quite different.

KIRBY: I created the Hulk, too, and saw him as a kind of handsome Frankenstein.

TCH: Strongly enough, that was my first impression, but everyone else thought he was a monster to be pitied.

KIRBY: I never felt the Hulk was a monster, because I felt the Hulk was me. I feel all the characters were me. Being a monster is just the surface thing. I won't accept that either because I want to know why the Hulk jumps around, what the limits of his strength are. I feel that the Hulk's strength is unlimited for some damn reason I don't understand. It's just unlimited, and when I had him fight with the Thing, I felt the Hulk broke it off at a point where he hadn't fully tested his strength. I feel it should be that way.

Dr. Doom is a paranoid. He thinks he's ugly and he wants the whole world to be like him. Dr. Doom is the fox who had his tail cut off, and he's trying to talk the whole world into having their tails cut off so when everyone has his tail cut off, he becomes the most handsome fox. That's ridiculous, because paranoids are insane people who never get their way. Hitler tried it, you know.

TCH: Doom shows it when he fights the FF. He wants to get rid of them, but then kills someone else off and lets the FF go.

KIRBY: And not only that, but he feels he has the right to do it. Don't get me wrong about Doom — he doesn't feel he's doing anything wrong. He feels he's fully justified in what he's doing because he feels he's a superior being. His superiority stems from his one weakness — the fear that he's ugly. Just because he got some acid scars on his face to which he never adjusted. And when you don't adjust to something, you become insane.

TCH: He knows that Reed Richards is intelligent.

KIRBY: He won't accept that and that's why he's insane. An insane man is a frustrated man. You'll notice that every time he invents something that's supposed to be the ultimate in something, Reed Richards will come along and find a wire or find the weakness in this gadget and there it goes. Doom is frustrated because instinctively he knows that Reed Richards has a superior intelligence.

TCH: He gets in a stalemate with the FF and then tries to defeat Spider-Man or Daredevil and he gets beaten.

KIRBY: Well, I feel that's wrong. This is company policy.

TCH: You mean that the bad guy must always lose?

KIRBY: That's something I can do nothing about, but I don't feel it should be that way. You can quote me on that.

TCH: At least give the villain a chance because evil does win.

KIRBY: No, I feel that nobody wins. You see, evil gets clobbered and good gets clobbered. Let's face it: Hitler won for 12 years. He was in a saddle there for 12 years and left an awful lot of corpses around, but he didn't win either. He just won temporarily and then we won, and that may be temporary. And somebody else is going to come along, but nobody really wins. A victory is a static concept. There's always going to be somebody around, in a hidden corner, plotting against your victory. I wrote a novel once. I felt that while we were horsing around in the '30s, there was a housepainter running around in Austria being kicked out of flophouses, and nobody ever paid any attention to him. Now I feel that there's somebody going around, someone else that nobody is paying attention to, and suddenly he'll emerge just like Hitler did. I don't know who he is, but I tried

writing a novel on the same theme and it got so scary I put it down. I never continued it because it could happen, and somehow I felt that, being a little bit of a paranoid myself, I might generate its happening. [Laughter] So I just put the book down and I feel it's happening anyway.

TCH: Would you ever do a book all by yourself?

KIRBY: Not necessarily, no. I don't feel that I should do everything myself.

TCH: I mean just once — do the pencils, inks, story, everything?

KIRBY: Yeah, sure. You know, everybody has that feeling: "Boy, if they could let me by myself!" Nobody does anything by himself. When a guy comes out and makes a statement like, "I did this," you can be sure 50 people helped him. It's true. The only time you do something by yourself is when you're in trouble. Then there's nobody and you're in trouble, and that's when you really count — that's when everything good in you or everything bad in you comes into play. That's when life has some meaning for you because what you do in that instance, or how you solve that particular problem affects you traumatically. It's like when you face living and dying. If I got cancer, I don't know how I'd face it. I just don't know. It would be a very terrifying thing. You see what I mean? Then comics become insignificant; everything I've done before becomes insignificant.

It's the same thing in combat. I had three months training in combat. I was in the combat infantry in Metz, which was a pretty hairy thing because we were against the Waffen SS, which was a pretty bad outfit. So that became terrifying to me because I didn't know what I was going to do. I didn't know how I was going to act or what would happen, and the inevitable happened. It's the only thing I have to say. The inevitable always happens to all of us. You're going to find yourself facing a car bearing down on you, or you're going to find yourself backed into something you can't get out of, and you have to figure a way out. That's when you're important. Doing something else by yourself is no great achievement. If you do something, it could be mediocre, but if the time is right for it, a whole lot of people will yell, "Hurray!" And then you're a genius. That's all.

The real thing is your own guts and what they are made of. What are you? Not in relation to a comic book, not in relation to anything else, but you when, as they say, "the chips are down," or something like that — what are you? How are you going to react to this experience? Life is action and reaction, and it's as simple as that. You react to something. You can react rightly or wrongly. That's the fun. I think things that make me happy or sick or bad — they're all experiences I react to. If I react to something, I feel I'm alive and it could be a very bad reaction. I don't know — it could be anything. I might not like it or raise a lot of hell about it, but even that is a reaction. I'm not trying to philosophize. I'm just trying to state facts as I see them. People seem to like my artwork and I accept that, having a little ego, but it's all been agonizing for me. Whereas some fella today has all the avenues open to him and could have done it a hell of a lot easier than I did.

TCH: Do you create just to entertain yourself, and hope somebody else will like it?

KIRBY: Yes. I'll create a concept just to keep from getting bored. A new character or a new type of thing might come out of it; a new type of story or format. I don't know what will come out of it. I really can't say, but it's really a heck of a lot of fun. The Silver Surfer was an afterthought. When I did Galactus, I suddenly realized he was God and I had done something Biblical there. I felt that somehow God in connection with — well, I felt, wouldn't it be great if I could show a kind of fallen angel type of thing, which the Silver Surfer is.

TCH: Did you expect to use him later?

KIRBY: No, I didn't know what would become of him. If the readership responds, we use the characters and if the readership fades out, the character fades out. In other words, they're myths. Nobody worships Hercules today so there is no

Hercules, and it's the same thing with one of our characters. If people won't read Ant-Man, not won't read Ant-Man, but feel that not enough has been done on him, they won't respond. All the characters are good but there is not enough time to follow them all out individually.

TCh *Life is too short.*

KIRBY That's true. It's a game, really. When the game ends ... I don't know ...

TCh *How old are you?*

KIRBY I'll be 52 in August. Oh, I never figured to make it. I feel I'm ahead in some ways and behind in others. A bald guy will tell me I have a great head of hair and I'll say, "Well, you should see my teeth." [Laughter] It's like that. We all have pluses and minuses.

TCh *It equals itself out.*

KIRBY Sure, it all balances itself out. Actually, we never have to worry about getting what we want. We all want certain things so we grow in that direction. We gravitate in that direction, really. If a guy doesn't want to be big, he won't be big. It's what we really want. Now, I'd like to play the harmonica but I know damn well I'm never going to play it because subconsciously I don't want to learn. I like to listen to it, love to play it, but I know damn well I'm never going to learn. I just don't want to. I want the effect and not the cause.

When I had the *Young Romance* books, a fellow would come up to me and say, "Gee, I can draw better than Caniff, do you realize that?" I would look at his stuff, and I could see that he was spoofing me or spoofing himself, but I'd never turn him down. I would say, "OK, here's a script, do it," and he never came back. The guys that came back were the guys that knew they really could do it just by doing it. They just did it, but the guys who couldn't do it were really just fans. In other words, they loved to look at artwork. They could tell me everything about Caniff or Al Williamson or Will Eisner, or anybody else. The one pull was that they would never mention themselves. They would say, "Gee, look at this stuff, just like Will Eisner. It's better than Eisner," but they would never say, "This is what I drew," because they knew damn well they just copied something and it looked very good. I didn't object to it. I said, "Go ahead and do it," knowing full well that they would never come back. I never blocked anybody, not even a man that's out to hurt me. I won't block him. I just let him do his own thing. If he runs up against a stone wall, it's just too bad. Either he's going to fail or succeed, and I won't block him. I'm not going to plot against him or scream or stop him in any way. If he strikes me, I'll strike him back. If he plots against me, I'll plot back because, after all, I have to preserve myself. I'm not going to initiate any pressure on him because I know he's going to do something and I just want to let him do it. But he's got to take the consequences. I feel that's what makes up a man. In other words, you're either going to get stomped or succeed.

TCh *It seems that you change your style every so often. If you look at all the stuff you've done, you can see points where you've changed.*

KIRBY You're goddamn right, and it might change again if I live that long.

TCh *I could tell in the beginning of your last Doctor Doom storyline, the Prisoner takeoff, that you were going through a transition because you weren't at your best.*

KIRBY Well, I'm not going to bat a 1,000. I'm not going to tell anybody that I'm evolving in a superior way or an inferior way. They're going to have to judge that for themselves. I'm going to do something and someone's going to react to it. Sometimes I know how they're going to react and sometimes I don't, and if I batted a 1,000 all the time, I'd be damn near perfect, which I'm not. I can't be — nobody is. That's why I don't believe edgewise in anything because there's always a flaw in anything anybody says. Sure, I believe more things, but I'm flexible enough not to live or die by them. I won't live or die by what any man made up. I live or die by what I see, that's all.



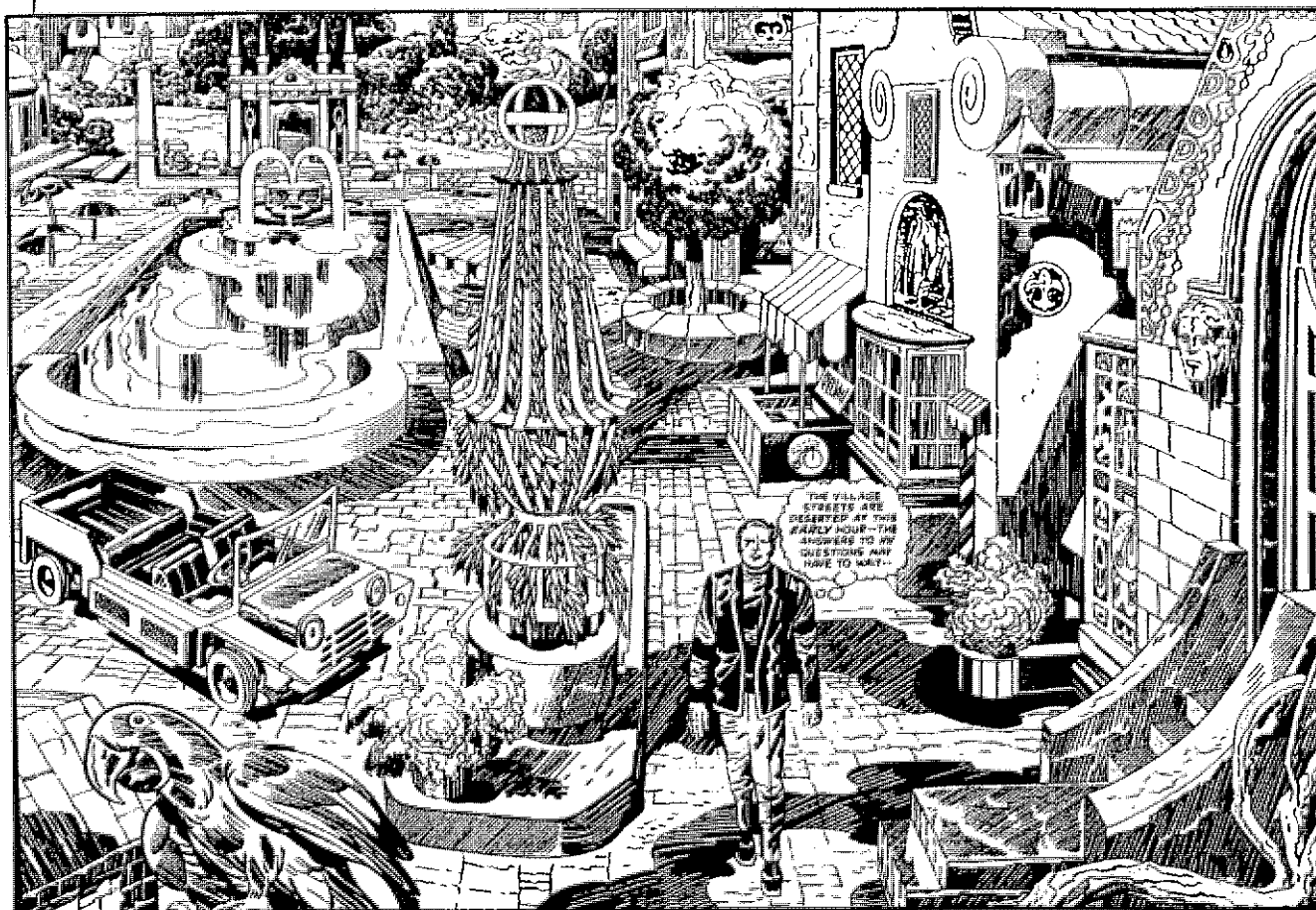
TCh *You must see a lot.*

KIRBY Well, I don't know. I'm usually in a room about this size, but I feel I see a lot because I analyze a lot. I see the same things you do but maybe I got more time to analyze it whereas you might not. So I sit and think and it's as simple as that. If you can sit and think for 20 years, you can come up with quite a bit.

[Laughter] I've come up with quite a bit that might be a big dud.

TCh *Do you have any preference as to who inks your pencils?*

Panel from
Fantastic Four
#50, 1966. Inked
by Joe Sinnott.



*Double-page spread
from Kirby's
unpublished Prisoner
adaptation. Inked by
Milm Royce.*

KIRBY I like some styles over others. I feel they're all good men, I really do.

TCH But don't you prefer one inker over another?

KIRBY Well, I won't identify any names but there are some styles that are too graceful for adventure-type stuff. Let me put it this way: it might be an inking style effective on a romance strip, whereas it might be ineffective on an adventure strip. There are some styles that will help an adventure strip, even give it more impact than it had, and I enjoy that. I feel a romance strip should have a style of its own, and it's not blood-and-thunder stuff, so a fellow may be inking romance strips for years and suddenly be given an adventure strip to do. This is unfair. I feel he's being taken out of his element. There's always a chance that if he draws adventure strips long enough or inks them long enough, he'll adjust to it and develop another style which is good for adventure strips. I feel that every one of

those men are good for the fact that they're constantly doing a strip which is going to change their style and enhance it in the adventure medium.

TCH I know Carmine Infantino would ink some of his own stories to keep from losing the art.

KIRBY I never did that. I had to get a lot of strips out. I had to get a lot of volume out. I feel that I can ink fairly well but certainly not in the class of certain people. I've always felt that when I pencil a drawing, that's it for me. It may sound very eccentric but I feel that's it for me, and if I were inking it I would be drawing that picture all over again for no reason at all. I won't ink it if I don't have to. I feel inking in itself is a separate kind of art. I feel I can't go beyond that and I won't. I'm done with it when I'm finished. I won't do any inking unless someone says, "You better ink this," and that's it. Then I do it. My job is what the policy of the organization calls for. I feel every professional does that and I feel that, in my

[[Moleman might be a crybaby when a lot of less talented people are going through life with a lot more courage with their afflictions, and Moleman becomes human that way.]]

own way, I'm a professional. I'm not a lawyer or a doctor, certainly, but I'm doing the best I can. Or the best of what I know in this particular field.

Tch: It's called "using your talent."

KIRBY: Well, I feel talent is experience. It's really nothing more than that. I feel if you give all your energy to a certain thing, you can be a genius. If you give a little less of your energy, you can be a professional. If you're downright lazy, you can be nice and mediocre and really get along. Sometimes I feel I'm missing out by not being mediocre.

Tch: You read other comics, don't you?

KIRBY: Certainly, that's my bag. I like to see what other guys are doing and I like to see how their minds are running, what they're experimenting with. Sometimes that becomes a stepping stone to myself. I can say, "Well, he's got a great idea. What would my version be like?" Because all we're doing is variations on old basic things. We might be working on the same idea but one variation might be my own and another his, and both might be interesting. Why not produce them?

Tch: Do you buy your own comics, the ones you draw?

KIRBY: I try to keep track of them. I have the issues sent to me from the office or I buy them. I keep track of the costumes that way. I keep making mistakes. Sometimes I go too fast or my mind is thinking of other things.

Tch: Can you find mistakes in your strips?

KIRBY: Sure, I'll goof all the time. I'll make mistakes, big mistakes. It's like an old car I had. I used to drive it around like crazy, used to have a wonderful time in it, but parts would fly all over the street. It was a gangster-type car, which they said a little old lady used to wipe off every day and not use much. The whole damn motor was filled with sawdust. The thing was a wreck, a 12-cylinder wreck. I used to tear through the streets with the thing and the parts would fly all over the street. It was a wild scene and I loved it. But maybe that's what the script is. There are going to be parts all over the place but it's travelling.

Tch: Why do so many old villains keep coming back to haunt our superheroes?

KIRBY: We feel that the old villains have never really been explored. We'll bring them back after three or four issues and maybe even longer than that. They'll come back. We may like to explore another aspect of their lives. For instance, I did this Moleman story in FF where he had built a house. I stressed the fact, which hasn't been stressed before, that Moleman might be a crybaby when a lot of less-talented people are going through life with a lot more courage with their afflictions, and Moleman becomes human that way. It humanizes him, and then he retreats again into his own insanity and goes underground. He's ready for another episode. I feel they should be rejuvenated from time to time so people can take a good look at them, and it reflects the fact that everybody has a weakness. Nobody is perfect.

Tch: Thor used to fly around Earth and fight supervillains, but back in '65 and '66, you started to get on this mythology-fantasy kick. Who was responsible for that — you or Stan?

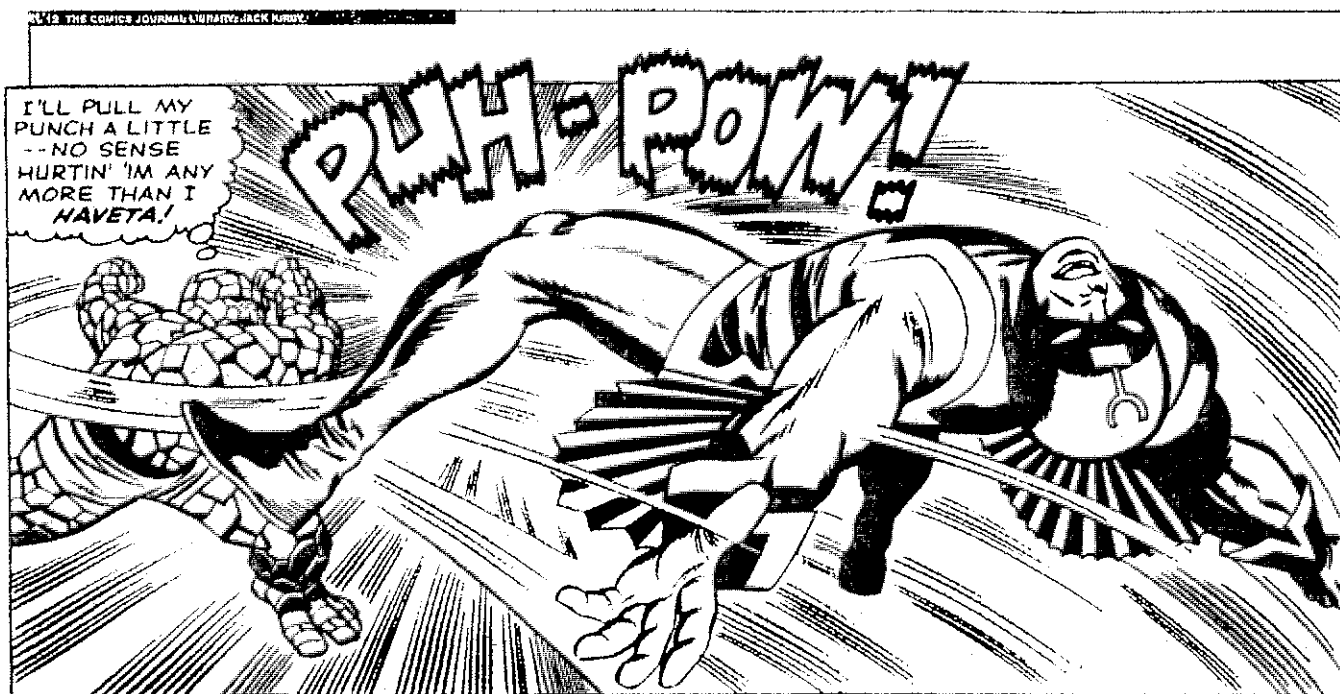
KIRBY: Both of us, in a way. I researched it and gave my version of it, and Stan gave his version of it. Stan humanized it in a way where, for instance, I might be concerned about Thor's relation to the other gods. I might bring up a Ulik or I might bring up something out of the wild blue yonder, like the Orade — that great big thing which nobody knew anything about. I tried to fathom it myself. And Stan would come down to Earth and find Thor's relationship with Earth people. In other words, we go up and down the spectrum always trying to find something new in it. Life is like that. If we could sit still, life would come to have a sameness to us. So we have to go up and down that goddamn spectrum searching for something. I know after a certain amount of one scene I'll get restless. You can toss me into paradise and I'll get sick of it in ten days. I'll say, "How about a chance in hell?"



Tch: Turn stones that haven't been turned before?

KIRBY: Not stones, but maybe there's something in the human makeup that keeps you zooming from one end of the spectrum to the other. Searching for

Panel from *Fantastic Four* #59, 1969. Inked by Joe Sinnott.



something. I feel that a lot of us are in a kind of three-dimensional cage. It's a cage and we're running around this cage like squirrels because it would be great if we could break out of the third dimension and roam around in infinity. Wouldn't that be great? You think of the infinite possibilities in an infinite concept. We live in a limited concept. So we run up and down the cage. We've seen everything. If we haven't seen it in the movies, we've seen it in the zoo. And if we haven't seen it there, we've seen it at home, and if not there, we've seen it at a basketball court. You see all aspects of human behavior. You've seen good sides, bad sides — but they're the same sides. So you go through life hunting for variations, but you're always in that cage. You'll see guys going after a girl and then drop this girl and go for another kind of girl, but somehow their type of girl is a variation of the type they had before. That's the way we are; we run up and down that cage. That's the way I feel about it. It's just my own concept. So I run up and down the cage playing it as cool as I can. In other words, I'm not just a frantic monkey.

TCh: How were you able to draw five strips at once during the "Marvel Age"?

KIRBY: I forced myself. It's not very easy, especially when you're in a field that's picking up momentum and there isn't too much of a staff to take the burden off you.

TCh: What do you mean, there wasn't a staff?

KIRBY: There wasn't much of a staff. So I had all that to do and it was a back-breaking job. But, like I said, my generation adjusted to it.

TCh: Is it smoother going now?

KIRBY: Yes, it's eased off a bit. I'm grateful for that because I can read a newspaper occasionally.

TCh: Would you like to do another strip, even after all that work?

KIRBY: If they're ready, I'm always ready. I never refused a job. I've always been ready to do a job; that's my bag. I'll do a job for Stan. I'll do a job for someone else. I'll do a job for my family. It's the type of person I am. If I have a job to do, I'll do it. I've got to do it.

TCh: Getting back to different things and seeing things differently, when you made the *Frightful Four*, did you see them as an evil *Fantastic Four*?

KIRBY: Yes I did and I can see the FF as evil. I can see our heroes being evil while trying to be good.

TCh: Is that another reason why you created the *Inhumans*?

KIRBY: No, I created the *Inhumans* because the competition was coming up in the field so I thought we would try a new concept: The family concept. So when someone came up with one superhero, we would slap them with five. As simple as that.

TCh: They do it big, so you do it bigger.

KIRBY: It's the only way. The only way you can stay ahead. Maybe it's like being thrown in with Texans. A watermelon there is a potato to us ... uh, a potato there is a watermelon to us. [Laughter] I'm zooming around all the time.

TCh: I wish all the heroes wouldn't stay in New York. I'd like to see them swinging around here.

KIRBY: We've got them swinging around now, but they haven't got any capes on. I don't think superheroes have anything special, except a certain talent.

TCh: Because they're smarter, stronger and better than us?

KIRBY: I don't think they're smarter, stronger or better than us. I think they are themselves in their own way; they can be defeated by things human or inhuman, or they can be defeated by circumstances. I would hate to be a superhero. I really would. My neighbors would kill me. They would find some way to do it because they wouldn't be able to stand me.

TCh: You would be different ...

Panel from *Fantastic Four* #46, 1966.

INTERVIEW: THERE'S SOMETHING STUPID IF VIOLENCE IS VIOLENCE, IS IT?

KIRBY: Not only would I be different, I'd be perfect in my way and they would hate me for it. And they would try to find flaws and that would be my biggest flaw — not being able to get along with them, and I would grow bitter, and it might change me from being a superhero to a supervillain.

TCH: *I think comics have reached the stage where they don't need the [Comics] Code [Authority]. What do you think?*

KIRBY: I think we should avoid it. I don't know. I think it's opening a lid on a tunnel, an endless tunnel in which we all run down and we just don't know how it's going to end, and we get deeper and sicker and sicker until we become adjusted to unmentionable things. Speaking for myself, I know there's violence, but I like to show violence in a graceful way, a dramatic way, but never in its true way. I just don't like to look at it that way. There is something stupid in violence as violence. There's something stupid about jealousy; there's something even stupider about love. In other words, we have to take a basic mineral and make something out of it. Now basic violence is stupid because I was in war and I saw the results of it. It was just stupid. I used to walk around and watch the dead bodies in the field and the dead cows and the dead kids and the dead houses and the dead fields and that dead sky. There was smoke all over and you couldn't see the sky. It was just stupid. I got to the point where I couldn't walk in that kind of an atmosphere anymore. I feel that we shouldn't degenerate to that level. I can't. I won't take violence in that form, even if it is the truth. I'm a certain type of man. I don't have to become another type of man just because I can.

TCH: *So you use violence in a story just to make the story good, not for violence's sake.*

KIRBY: Right. I'm not a sick, that's all. I don't believe I'm a sick. To a sick, I may be a sick, but not according to my own standards. I feel what I'm doing in comics is violent, but my kind of violence. I feel dancing is a kind of violence. I feel any kind of movement is violence in a lesser degree. But violence — basic, raw violence in which violence is inflicted in a mindless, terrible way — I can't see. I won't look at it and I won't tolerate it and I won't put it in my drawings. I'll show a reaction. I'll show a splat or a bang. Now you'll see a guy flying and you'll see him go through a house but you'll never see him hurt or you'll never see the house completely destroyed. You'll notice there's no realism in whatever I do because they are things as I like to see them. I just like to see them that way; that's my bag and it's my fantasy. You want to sue me, great.

TCH: *Stan says there isn't any competition for Marvel.*

KIRBY: I don't feel there is.

TCH: *You mean there is no one that could show Marvel up?*

KIRBY: Right.

TCH: *You must admit that DC has quite a few good characters.*

KIRBY: Yeah, but I feel that they're sitting on them. Sure I love the characters they have, but they're sitting on them. I feel that they're more conservative at DC. They won't let a character loose. Stan will look at all the characteristics of a character, which is good, because I think the best approach to humanity is to try to find all the aspects of it and ourselves. I know the people at DC aren't afraid — the artists aren't afraid. I know Steve Ditko isn't afraid and the other artists aren't afraid, but I think the company policy is too conservative. They sit on their characters, who are very good; they won't let them out. Who's going to stop Marvel from running over them? I would rather watch a Marvel character than a DC character, although I realize the DC characters have good potential, excellent potential.

TCH: *Batman may have the most potential.*

KIRBY: I think Batman's been murdered. He's been made to look ridiculous. Who could believe in him? I think comics have to be believed in. I think movies have just dragged Batman through the streets in his jockstrap.

I think it's tragic that DC hasn't exploited its heroes to the extent where they can't let them be people in trouble. I think you can be too bland or too

sterile or too unimaginative. I'm afraid they may be lacking imagination or experience. I think it's experience, really. I think that, well ... I've been beaten up in my day and I've had a variation of every experience you could ever name. A lot of guys haven't or maybe they have — maybe they've been in one place too long. I haven't. I feel that they have lured themselves up in a format which they find hard to unhinge. They should all take a vacation. I should too! A whole new gang of guys should walk right into Marvel and DC, and I would love to go fishing and see what kind of ball game comes out of it. I would love to see it because it would be a refreshing thing to see. What kind of concept would come out of someone who doesn't think like I do? What would happen, what would come out of you? I don't know, but I sure as hell would be curious to see it.

Someone up at DC once told me, "Jack, watch what we're doing now. We're coming out with something really good and wait until you see this." I waited. I saw it trying to be born but just not making it. But I would like to see us all junked.

TCH: *Throw you out the window?*

KIRBY: Yeah, but make it comfortable. I would like to see a bunch of 19-year olds go to it. I would love to watch that. All I really know is superheroes, and I would just like to see how a young fellow would see a superhero. Your version, your brother's, your colleague's or somebody in your age group. That would be a lot of fun for me. It would be a new experience for you because you have all these lives to play around with. I don't see them as characters. I see them as lives.

TCH: *Do you get the feeling that you're God?*

KIRBY: Maybe. Maybe that's what God's all about. We don't know how we're born; we just came into being. Maybe God has some kind of pencil. Do you realize that? To God, we may be two-dimensional. Why not? Our dreams are elliptical — we're elliptical. Why can't our dreams be as real as we are, in their own fashion? They think they're alive. And they have no concept of what we are, and maybe someday if God wakes up, we'll all be gone. See what I mean?

TCH: *Not really.*

KIRBY: It's kind of deep. I feel I'm God because these things are living or moving to my concepts. Good or bad, that's how they come out. I can even punish them by erasing them but I'm not that mad yet. I like to make them as perfect as I can, and I feel now that's what God is doing with us.

I'm just trying to give you some of my points. Believe me, I'm not out to make a speech or anything like that. It's just the way I am because when I talk to you, in a way, I'm working. You don't realize it, but I'm working. When I look at a magazine, I'm working. I don't see that magazine; I see what I want to see.

TCH: *When did you come out to California?*

KIRBY: January, 1969.

TCH: *At the time of the floods, storms ...*

KIRBY: I thought I was the cause. California started to go piece by piece. First mud slides and then winds and I figured; well, if I didn't get back this whole mess is gonna be gone... and, well, I'm not that paranoid so I figured it would go away sooner or later.

TCH: *Why did you come out here?*

KIRBY: I never did think I would come out here. I was in Long Island for about 20 years and never went outside my own doorstep. I had to do something about my wife's health, and I thought I might find a milder climate here. My little girl is frail and she couldn't take the severe winters anymore. I find California great for her. California is a place for kids. It's wasted on me but for kids you can't beat it. You're lucky to be here.

TCH: *I'm glad I am.*

KIRBY: I think it's a great state. I hope to be here a long time.

TCH: *With your luck, you'll see the millennium.*

Basic violence is stupid because I was in war and I saw the results of it. I used to walk around and watch the dead bodies in the field and the dead cows and the dead kids and the dead houses and the dead fields and that dead sky. There was smoke all over and you couldn't see the sky. It was just stupid. ☹